

**SUBJECT:** Victims Services Division

**BRANCH:** Office of Prevention and Victim Services

The Youth Authority (YA) designated the first Victims Services Specialist in 1983 and services have grown in response to victims' rights and needs and a continued focus on offender accountability. The Victims Services Division (VSD) provides coordinated services to victims, local victim witness/assistance agencies, and YA staff. The VSD also works in conjunction with probation departments, judges and California Department of Corrections to enhance services to crime victims.

The VSD is based on the premise that the justice system is accountable to victims and has a responsibility to offer services and implement programs that address the impact of crime on victims. The following victim oriented services and programs are provided by the VSD:

**Services to victims:**

- Notification of offender status
- Notification of progress reviews and parole hearings
- Accompaniment to parole hearings
- Restitution collection and disbursement
- Assistance in preparing victim impact statements
- Referrals for civil recovery, counseling, financial assistance and restraining orders

**Restitution Collection**

Through, enhanced collection efforts, interagency agreements, staff/offender training, system development and legislation restitution collection continues to increase.

The VSD reviews cases for victim restitution orders, Victims of Crime claims and fine assessments. These efforts are enhanced by a California Victim and Government Claims Board interagency agreement, which has resulted in aggressive identification of offender restitution obligations, increased assessment, collection and disbursement of money to victims and the California Victim and Government Claims Board. The VSD collaborates with probation departments, judges and county revenue collections units to clarify restitution orders and balances.

Effective January 1, 1998 a restitution law (Assembly Bill 1132) authorizes the YA to deduct up to 50 percent of each deposit into wards' trust accounts to pay any restitution owed. An additional 10% deduction is authorized as reimbursement for the cost of administering the law. In the first fiscal year, victim restitution and fines increased by 179% and totaled \$273,624.

**Impact of Crime on Victims**

The Impact of Crime on Victims (ICV) classes began in 1984 and are designed to give victims a voice in the justice system; and hold offenders accountable for their actions. Victim speakers are an essential program component and are often crime victims or victim services providers such as representatives from victim advocacy programs, rape crisis and domestic violence centers, and victim witness programs. The ICV program has been replicated locally and nationally.

### **National Crime Victims' Rights Week**

The YA observes National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) through a variety of statewide and local site activities. The VSD coordinates and disseminates resource material and information to site coordinators. The April issue of the CYA Today publication is dedicated to enhancing the awareness of victims rights, needs and wants as well as highlighting YA victim awareness programming and fundraising activities.

### **Interagency Cooperation**

#### **❑ Victims Reparation Project**

The YA and California Victim Compensation & Government Claims Board entered into an interagency agreement to permanently fund the Victims Reparation Project, a sub component of the VSD. The project ensures offenders are held accountable for the financial consequence of their criminal activity. Cases are monitored for restitution compliance and contact is made with the committing court to amend orders. To achieve consistency in practices related to fines and victim restitution, the project provides policy guidance within the YA and to outside agencies.

#### **❑ Direct Services Enhancement Project**

Beginning in 1998, the Office of Criminal Justice Planning awarded Victims of Crime Act funding to YA for the Direct Services Enhancement Project. The project provides services to victims of more serious and violent offenders committed to the YA, many of the victims/survivors having no previous contact with the VSD. Services include an update on the offender's status and current location, assistance in preparing victim impact statements and accompaniment to Youthful Offender Parole Board hearings. The project also focuses on outreach to victims including a TTY line, translated victim assistance materials and emergency travel funds to attend hearings.

### **Agency Collaboration**

The VSD has collaborative meetings or activities with the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency, the California Victim Compensation & Government Claims Board, the Attorney General's Office and the California Victim Witness Coordinating Council.

### **Legislation**

The VSD proposes and monitors legislation related to public safety, offender accountability and crime victims' rights in the YA.

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